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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [BA](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [REGION](#)
BILAT, OFFICIALS, CTR
SUBJECT: CENTRAL COMMAND GENERAL ABIZAID'S MAY 8 MEETING
WITH KING HAMAD

Classified by Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

Summary

11. (S) Centcom Commander General Abizaid met with King Hamad May 8 and discussed the May 6 GCC Consultative Meeting in Riyadh, the Iranian threat, placement of a regional counter-terrorism center in Bahrain, Iraq, and the upcoming parliamentary elections. The King said the GCC Secretary General had read aloud President Bush's letter to the GCC leaders, the first time such a thing was done. Saudi King Abdullah had requested that Omani Deputy PM Sayyid Fahd undertake a trip to Tehran to discuss Iran's nuclear program. King Hamad said the GCC leaders had put aside their petty differences to work on the Iran issue with a unified front. He recommended that any military strike on Iran should target the regime and not just the nuclear program. In the event that Iran obtains nuclear weapons, the U.S. should consider declaring the GCC to be "under its umbrella." The King was pleased that Bahrain had been designated the home of a regional counter-terrorism center, and would look to the United States to help upgrade the sophistication of the local intelligence system. The King hoped the next Iraqi government was strong enough to take on its security responsibilities. In reference to the parliamentary elections later this year, the King said he would balance a more "militant" elected lower house by changing the composition of the appointed upper house. End Summary.

POTUS Letter Read Aloud at GCC Meeting

12. (C) In their May 8 meeting, King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa told Central Command's General Abizaid that Saudi King Abdullah had instructed the GCC Secretary General to read aloud President Bush's letter to heads of state at the GCC Consultative Meeting in Riyadh on May 6, saying this was the first time such a thing was done. The King said the letter was very clear, had everything in it, and reflected a great deal of experience in the region. He said that King Abdullah had proposed sending a GCC delegation to Iran to demonstrate the countries' solidarity against Iran's nuclear activities. The ostensible reason for the trip would be to address regional environmental concerns but in fact the envoy, Omani Deputy Prime Minister Sayyid Fahd, would discuss the nuclear program. (Note: The King said Sayyid Fahd did not want to take on the mission but that King Abdullah had insisted.) The GCC believes there should be no nuclear activities in the region and that the Gulf should be free of

all WMD.

13. (C) Commenting on the mood at the meeting, the King said it was important that the GCC leaders had put aside their little differences to work on the Iran issue with a unified front. King Abdullah had said there should be no sign of dispute in the meeting minutes. He had urged the leaders to work together "because the threat is getting bigger." King Abdullah had continued that the GCC's allies would provide assistance if the GCC showed solidarity.

Target Iranian Regime, Not Nukes

14. (C) King Hamad said he had been asked what he would do if he had to deal with the Iranian challenge, and he had replied that he was glad he would not be the one to do it. He advised General Abizaid that, if there were a military strike, the target should be the regime and not just the nuclear program. Although there were some good people in the Iranian government, including Foreign Minister Motakki, who he noted he would meet later that day, he said the regime was bad. He said that he would tell Motakki that, even if Iran had the right to develop a civilian nuclear program, it was not the smart thing to do if Iran wanted to be a part of the international community. The Gulf is "a small lake" and the GCC does not want it to be destroyed or contaminated.

15. (C) The King stated that Iranian President Ahmadi-Nejad had called him and asked if the GCC could help Iran deal with the United States. The King had responded that the GCC could do nothing while Iran occupied several islands in the Gulf. Ahmadi-Nejad had said he could give all guarantees that there

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would be no radiation leaks from the nuclear program and that the GCC could send its experts to inspect Iranian facilities.

Referring to news of Ahmadi-Nejad sending a letter to President Bush, the King told General Abizaid that Iran was just trying to gain time.

GCC Preparing for Possible Conflict

16. (C) The King suggested that if Iran obtained nuclear weapons, the U.S. should consider declaring the GCC to be "under its umbrella." General Abizaid replied that we would stand by our good allies and friends and the U.S. would not allow the Gulf to be dominated by Iranian mullahs. The King said that the U.S. was a strong ally and the "greatest support" to Bahrain. The GCC countries were now talking quietly about plans to assist each other in the event of a conflict in the region. He said the GCC would do its part on Iran and that the U.S. and GCC should continue their close consultations. General Abizaid advised that the U.S. and GCC member states could work together on a bilateral basis to improve the shared early warning system for air defense, using the PAC-3 and U.S. Navy platforms. Such a system would add to the security and confidence of the region.

Bahrain Home to Regional CT Center

16. (S) The King said that at the Consultative Meeting, King Abdullah had supported the idea of a regional counter-terrorism center and had made a surprise announcement that he wanted the center to be located in Bahrain. King Hamad quickly accepted, and was pleased that the other leaders backed the proposal. GCC Ministers of Interior will meet in two weeks to study the details of the center and make solid recommendations at the GCC Summit in December. The King said the advantages of hosting the center outweighed the disadvantages. Bahrain would look to the United States for

support on the technical side to improve the sophistication of the local intelligence system. Bahrain needs its GCC partners to assist in funding the construction of the center, which would need to be an extremely secure and well-protected facility. King Abdullah had said that he wanted the center to be in Bahrain because "Bahrain is the most secure country in the Gulf."

Strong Leadership Needed in Iraq

17. (C) Turning to Iraq, the King said that "from day one," he thought the post-Saddam government should be strong, even if it was a military government in civilian clothes. A gradual transformation of the country is better than turning it upside down suddenly. After Saddam was deposed, exiles "who speak well," like Chalabi and Jaafari, were given a chance, but they were not tough enough. Iraqi forces now had to step up and take on the role of protecting security in the country. Although the Iraqis had missed some opportunities, there was still time. In response to General Abizaid's question, the King said that Jordan has close links with Iraqi Sunnis and should take the lead on working with that community.

Shura Council to Balance "Militants" in Lower House

18. (C) In an unusual detour, the King turned to domestic politics, saying that people were worried about "militant" MPs being elected to the lower house of parliament, the Council of Representatives (COR). He said there was no reason to worry because the appointed upper house, the Shura Council, serves as a balance to the COR. If the elected MPs "are Salafis or Hizballah," then he will make sure the upper house continues to serve as a check on them. Although there are "demagogues" in the COR, the Shura members are more clever and give the government a harder time. He warned, however, that if the "Hizballah" MPs supported Iran, there could be problems. (Comment: He presumably is referring to leading Shia opposition society Al Wifaq when using the term Hizballah. While some members may support Lebanese Hizballah, Al Wifaq is not a terrorist, or even a violent, group.) The King said he is doing what he can to build up public confidence in the political system, even, for the

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first time, revealing the budget of the Royal Court.

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